

EIGHTY YEARS SINCE.

THE FOLLIES AND FASHIONS OF OUR GRANDFATHERS.—Embellished with Thirty-seven half-page Plates. By ALEXANDER W. TUEB. London: Field & Tuer; New York: Scribner & Welford. \$6.00. pp. 366.

Mr. Tuer has produced one of the quaintest books of the time, and a volume too which is full of interest. He has carried out his novel enterprise, nor over, with a surprising and delightful completeness in the mechanical part of the work. The external appearance of the book is unique. The back and corners are of buckskin, the sides of brown, old-fashioned board, the title labels on back and side are of canvas stitched in imitation of the samplers of our grandmothers, the end-papers are of just such a chintz as the same venerable old parties were wont to make bed-furniture out of, and the marker is sampler-stitched like the titles. So odd and fascinating an outside is a much more faithful indication of the contents than were the farce pictorial signs which used to adorn the exterior of the booths at Richardson's Show and Bartholomew Fair. Indeed, Mr. Tuer has made but one mistake, and that consists in underestimating the popular appreciation of his antiquarian collection. Because of this doubt he has confessedly omitted from his introduction a gathering of "half-forgotten odds and ends relating to the manners and methods of our grandfathers," which there can be no doubt would have been relished as keenly as any of the good things he has here preserved. As to the method of the book it is peculiar, like everything else about it. Mr. Tuer has taken some two dozen of the magazines of 1807 and out of them he has made up a fictitious monthly which he entitles "The Follies and Fashions of Our Grandfathers." The illustrations of these monthly parts are of three kinds. First there is a series of fashion plates, all taken from the familiar illustrations of the period, but retouched and in many instances heightened with gold and silver." Next there are reproductions of the portraits of celebrated people, as, for example, Romney's pictures of Lady Hamilton, several of Hogarth's works, etc. And last there are colored engravings of hunting and coaching scenes, and embroidery patterns and other matters of that kind.

The fashion plates alone are worth the price of the volume, and even non-literary people will be interested by them. Though fashions change so often and so radically, nothing seems harder than to put one's self in the place of one's grandfather in regard to clothing. One cannot help wondering how the old folks can have refrained from laughing at one another all the time when they were rigged up in their coats with high rolling collars, their frilled shirts, their comical pantaloons or breeches and boots, and their amazin' hats, and how did the young bucks and it so easy to fall in love with the girls of the period, with their waists under their arms, their bumpy, skimpy skirts, their portentous coal-scuttle bonnets, and all the paraphernalia of a toilet that seems so outlandish to 1886? Perhaps we shall better understand this when, as wandering shades in the Elysian Fields, we observe the superior smile with which our descendants, eighty years hence, examine the fashions of the present year of grace.

Mr. Tuer has provided an ample entertainment for the sex which perhaps takes most interest in the fashions and follies of our grandmothers, by giving each month a long and elaborate fashion article. Local intelligence is represented by plenty of items about sporting events, such as races, boxing and fencing matches, cock fights, odd wagers and other incidents illustrating the tendencies of the time. A full account is given of a sensational duel at Newgate, whereby, at an execution, between forty and fifty lives were lost through the pressure of the crowd. The notices of fashionable events are often perfectly delicious, so fragrant are they with the aroma of a flunkiemanship from which age has eliminated the offensiveness, leaving only a delicate perfume of class distinction. Thus the opening of the Argyle Rooms is announced with the following fine flourish: "A grand suite of apartments, upon a magnificent scale, has been recently erected in Argyle-street for the handsome purpose of rendering the amusements of the rich and great conducive to the interests of the Fine Arts, and the Professions of Science and Taste." As an illustration of the survival of the fabulous there is an extract actually relating how "Captain Bathyway" is found at sea "a wonderful natural curiosity called the Goose Tree, Barnacle Tree, or Tree bearing Geese." This legend of the barnacle probably antedates the Travels of Sir John Mandeville, but that intrepid author was the first to introduce the yarn to an English audience, and as we see it lived some two hundred years in spite of the Royal Society and the sceptical philosophers of the eighteenth century.

Perhaps the dismaldest things in the time of our grandfathers were the jokes. To us the Johnnies in which most of the magazine literature is clothed compensates for the dulness of the humor, but the inventions which our revered ancestors viewed as evidence of the possession of a "pretty wit," as they would have said, world, if translated into "English as she is spoke," be more apt to provoke tears than merriment. Here is an example of the delicate persiflage of the period:

"THE MUSTACHIO.—Our young bucks of distinction, not content with their enormous whiskers, have mounted the Jewish mustachio on the upper lip. The ladies at first affected a dislike to this odious barrier; but as modern fashion soon reconciles the sex to any novelty, the mustachio salute is not only sanctioned now by dowers of the whiskerade tribe, but even voted by the young smooth-lipped belles to be 'fancy enough!'"

These are sundry short essays on various subjects. Most of them are evidently modelled after the "Spectator" papers, but they are not within hailing distance of the original, though by no means without interest. One of the features of this collection which is most effective is the familiar mention of names which already seem to belong to a hoary past. Here, for instance, is a bit of current gossip about Madame Catalani. She had a short fit of illness which obliged her to stop singing, and among the reports set afloat was one to the effect that "her husband (who is with her in England) had been private secretary to Bonaparte when he was First Consul; that having been discovered to be a spy here, he was ordered to quit the country, and that Madame Catalani would sing no more, as she was obliged to depart with him." This "infamous fabrication" is contradicted officially. There is a long criticism of Mr. Kemble's "Hamlet," as performed at Covent Garden, and the critic does not "think Mr. Kemble perfectly accurate in his conception of the character," and prefers Elliston's reading in some parts of the play.

There are accounts of several duels, notably that between Sir Francis Burdett and Mr. Paul, and advertisements, besides editorial condemnation, of the lotteries, which flourished rankly at the time. An experiment in lighting "a whole street" with coal gas is described, and gives the reader a distinct idea of the distance—more in progress than time—that separates us from the conditions of our grandfathers. Perhaps the literary judgments recorded will be found as interesting as anything. A stern critic reviews Lord Byron's "Hours of Idleness," and arrives at the conclusion that "although George Gordon—Lord Byron—may be a gentleman, an orator, or a statesman, unless he improves wonderfully he can never be a poet." Another interesting review is that of the poems of William Wordsworth, which begins: "That the volumes now before us we never saw anything better calculated to excite disgust and anger in a lover of poetry. The driveling nonsense of some of Mr. Wordsworth's poems is insufferable"—and so forth. But it must be remembered that Wordsworth had small honor in his own country until the beginning of the present generation. A drama by Theodore Hook fails no better than the works of the late poet, being pronounced "heavy beyond the usual heaviness of modern dramas," and to those who know what the "usual heaviness" referred to was this will seem trenchant criticism. But the wildest shot is in a criticism of Sir Walter Scott's "Ballads and Lyrical Pictures," which afford opportunity for an attack on the "Lay of the Last Minstrel." That poem, while conceded some "sweetness and elegance," is declared to be almost spoiled "by the slovenly dress in which they are

clothed." Scott is also accused of "mangling his metre" everywhere, and is severely informed that "an Italian improvisatore would have been ashamed to speak so unmusically," which must have gone high to crush Sir Walter, provided he saw the condemnation.

The temptation to cite oddities from Mr. Tuer's pleasant collection must, however, be resisted, though we have only skimmed the book. The selections are made with much judgment and throw a strong light upon the manners, customs and views of the period. The work is one which is not only a valuable one on account of its contents, but it is a good investment; for it is certain to appreciate and become rare in a few years, and by the end of the century will without doubt be worth five times its present selling price. Its intrinsic value too, consisting largely in genuine interest and artistic skill of manufacture, decoration and illustration, must always be greater than that of works which the collector prizes because of uniqueness in size or accidental abnormality.

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